

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Previously Presented) A process for decreasing the concentration of cholesterol in a marine oil in a pharmaceutical composition, the marine oil comprising cholesterol in free form, said process comprising:

a) adding a volatile working fluid to the marine oil, wherein the volatile working fluid comprises at least one fluid chosen from fatty acid esters, fatty acid amides, and hydrocarbons, and

b) subjecting the mixture of marine oil and volatile working fluid from step (a) to at least one stripping processing step, wherein an amount of the cholesterol present in the marine oil in free form is separated from the mixture together with the volatile working fluid; and

wherein said pharmaceutical composition is not a health supplement.

2. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein the volatile working fluid is essentially equally or less volatile than the cholesterol in free form that is to be separated from the marine oil mixture.

3. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein the fatty acid moieties of said fatty acid esters and fatty acid amides are obtained from a fat or oil obtained from at least one of vegetable, microbial, and animal origins.

4. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 3, wherein the animal fat or oil is a marine oil.

5. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein the volatile working fluid comprises at least one fatty acid ester composed of a C10-C22 fatty acid esterified with a C1-C4 alcohol.

6. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein the marine oil comprises at least one fatty acid chosen from saturated fatty acids in the form of triglycerides and unsaturated fatty acids in the form of triglycerides, and wherein the marine oil is obtained from fish or sea mammals.

7. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein the ratio of (volatile working fluid) : (marine oil) ranges from about 1:100 to 15:100.

8. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 7, wherein the ratio of (volatile working fluid) : (marine oil) ranges from about 3:100 to 8:100.

9. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein said at least one stripping processing step is carried out at a temperature in the range of 120-270°C.

10. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein said at least one stripping processing step is carried out at a temperature in the range of 150-220°C.

11. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein said at least one stripping processing step is carried out at a pressure below 1 mbar.

12. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein said at least one stripping processing step is chosen from thin-film evaporation processes, molecular distillations, short-path distillations, and any combinations thereof.

13. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 12, wherein the thin-film evaporation process is carried out at a mixture flow rate in the range of 30-150 kg/h·m².

14. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein said at least one stripping processing step is carried out at a mixture flow rate in the range of 80-150 kg/h·m².

Claims 15-18. (Cancelled)

19. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein the volatile working fluid is a distillate fraction from a process in which a mixture comprising at least one of ethyl and methyl esters of fatty acids obtained from marine oil is fractionated by distillation.

20. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1 wherein the marine oil further comprises cholesterol in bound form, and wherein the at least one stripping processing step is followed by the steps:

c) subjecting the stripped marine oil to at least one trans-esterification reaction with a C₁-C₆ alcohol under substantially anhydrous conditions; and

d) subjecting the transesterified marine oil from step (c) to at least one distillation procedure that yields a distillate marine oil fraction and a residue marine oil fraction, wherein the distillate marine oil fraction has concentrations of free and bound cholesterol lower than in the residue fraction.

21. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 20, wherein said C₁-C₆ alcohol is ethanol.

Claims 22-29. (Cancelled)

30. (Previously Presented) A process for decreasing the concentration of cholesterol in a marine oil comprising cholesterol in free form comprising:

a) adding a volatile working fluid to the marine oil, wherein the volatile working fluid comprises at least one fluid chosen from fatty acid esters, fatty acid amides, and hydrocarbons, and

b) subjecting the mixture of marine oil and volatile working fluid from step (a) to at least one stripping processing step, wherein an amount of the cholesterol present in the marine oil in free form is separated from the mixture together with the volatile working fluid;

wherein said process decreases the concentration of cholesterol in free form in the pharmaceutical composition to 1.4 mg/g to 3 mg/g.

31. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 30, wherein the volatile working fluid is essentially equally or less volatile than the cholesterol in free form that is to be separated from the marine oil mixture.

32. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 30, wherein the fatty acid moieties of said fatty acid esters and fatty acid amides are obtained from a fat or oil obtained from at least one of vegetable, microbial, and animal origins.

33. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 32, wherein the animal fat or oil is a marine oil.

34. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 30, wherein the volatile working fluid comprises at least one fatty acid ester composed of a C10-C22 fatty acid esterified with a C1-C4 alcohol.

35. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 30, wherein the marine oil comprises at least one fatty acid chosen from saturated fatty acids in the form of triglycerides and unsaturated fatty acids in the form of triglycerides, and wherein the marine oil is obtained from fish or sea mammals.

36. (Cancelled)

37. (Cancelled)